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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001835

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: GAZA PLC MEMBER: PALESTINIANS BLAME ISRAEL, U.S AND EU FOR GAZA'S WOES, NOT HAMAS

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Tom Duffy, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Gaza PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa told PolOff August 22 and 27 that most Gazans view Israel, enabled by the U.S. and EU, as the cause of Gaza's closures and poverty, not Hamas. Externally-imposed restrictions allow Hamas to claim it is the main force resisting occupation and shift blame for its errors, she said. Hamas officials are treating independent political officials and businesspeople with great respect, she said, but are harassing Fatah officials suspected of involvement in anti-Hamas efforts. She said the Executive Force is more honest and effective than the Fatah-dominated police, does not harass those who do not follow Muslim dress standards, and has been especially careful to protect foreign journalists, Christian institutions and music/internet shop owners, often victimized by Islamic vigilantes in the past. Al-Shawwa said cancellation of NGO and infrastructure projects in Gaza is undermining Gaza's civil society community, and complained that USG funding of West Bank but not Gaza projects "proves" Gaza is being subjected to collective punishment that reinforces separation between the two areas. End summary.

Palestinians Blaming Israel, Int'l Community for Suffering, Not Hamas

¶2. (C) In August 22 and 27 phonecalls, Gaza PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa told PolOff that nearly all Gazans (including most non-Hamas Palestinians) view Israel, enabled by the U.S. and EU, as the cause of Gaza's closures and poverty, not Hamas. She said she opposed Hamas' takeover of Gaza but said U.S./GOI policy is empowering Hamas by casting it as the main force resisting occupation and allowing Hamas to shift blame for its errors. She said Hamas is unlikely to surrender or collapse, and said the PA, USG and Israel will all have to deal with a stronger Hamas in the future if they attempt to freeze Gaza out of Palestinian politics and economic development.

Al-Shawwa: Hamas Not Molesting Independents, Not Enforcing Islamic Law

¶3. (C) Hamas officials are treating independent political officials and businesspeople with great respect, al-Shawwa said, and are only harassing those Fatah officials suspected of involvement in anti-Hamas protests or efforts to undermine Hamas control. She said the Hamas Executive Force is more honest and effective than the defunct, Fatah-dominated police and security forces, and while its members are generally religious, they do not harass anyone for inappropriate dress or not following Muslim religious practices (she noted that

she and her daughter walk around Gaza City unveiled and wear makeup, and never have been bothered). She said Hamas has been especially careful to protect foreign journalists and Christian institutions and music/internet shop owners who were often victimized by Islamic vigilantes before Hamas' violent takeover in June.

Executive Force Improving Security

¶4. (C) Al-Shawwa said Hamas has introduced order in Gaza's cities and is effectively fighting crime, especially once-rampant car theft. She said most residents of middle-class neighborhoods now feel comfortable to keep their vehicles on the street instead of locked in garages now that the Executive Force has shut down most of the gangs that would steal, strip and sell cars.

Al-Shawwa Pleads for USG to Continue
NGO Support, Infrastructure Projects

¶5. (C) Al-Shawwa, a noted advocate for women's empowerment and civil society development, said moderates in Gaza are being undermined and "held hostage to politics" by USG decisions to not fund new civil society projects beyond the small number of existing NGO grants. She said Gazans no longer accept a security rationale for the USG's cancellation of infrastructure projects like the Gaza water pipeline given significant recent security improvements in Gaza, and view the USG's failure to fund such "proof that the U.S. and Israel are determined to continue collective punishment and suffering in Gaza while they help the West Bank, which just

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reinforces what the U.S. and PA say they reject: separation between the West Bank and Gaza."

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